

NOTE: These minutes do not constitute a verbatim transcription of the CPC meeting.

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
March 17, 2005**

APPROVED

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Arthur Simons in the Committee of the Whole Room, 13th Floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, at 4:50 PM.

Roll Call: Present at the meeting were Commissioners Christensen, Glaser, Glenn, Jeffrey, Simons, and Wendler. Absent were Commissioners Cason (excused), Smith (excused) and Williams (excused).

Agenda: The Agenda was approved as submitted.

Minutes: **ACTION:** Commissioner Glaser moved to approve the minutes of Regular Meeting of March 3, 2005.
Commissioner Christensen seconded the motion.
Motion carried.

ACTION: Commissioner Glenn moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of March 10, 2005.
Commissioner Glaser seconded the motion.
Motion carried.

PRESENTATION--
Woodard Avenue Public Spaces Design Framework Plan: Heather Carmona, Director of the Woodward Avenue Action Association (WA3), presented the Woodard Avenue Public Spaces Design Framework Plan.

CPC staff member Gregory Moots provided background information regarding the Plan.

Woodward Avenue was designated a Michigan Heritage Route in 1999. Woodward Avenue from the Detroit River to the terminus loop in Pontiac was designated a federal America's Byway in 2002. Woodward is the only Byway in the State of Michigan and only one of 96 in the nation. The Woodward Heritage Team was formed as a result of these designations to take responsibility for the planning, designing, and implementing of changes and improvements to the public spaces along Woodward. The Team is comprised of representatives of the various cities through which Woodward passes and is a standing committee of the WA3.

The Team developed a corridor management plan as required for the America's Byways designation. The Public Spaces Framework Plan is an outgrowth of that corridor management plan. For Woodward, there are six key stakeholders in any plans-- the Woodward Heritage Team, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the local

municipalities, public transportation providers, Wayne and Oakland counties, and the businesses along the byway.

The Team is looking at the designations as a tool for economic development.

The purpose of the Plan is to set the context and criteria for the design of the district and/or community plans developed by the various communities and entities that have jurisdiction of the right-of-way along the corridor so it appears seamless and unified. The goal of the Plan is not to enforce one design for the whole corridor, but rather to supplement existing and future plans with elements that unify the corridor; districts can have identifiable characteristics.

Once the Plan is adopted by resolution by all of the communities that border the corridor, MDOT, who has ultimate control of the right-of-way, will consider the Plan in its designs and reviews of proposed improvements and give a high degree of consideration to individual communities that coordinate with the Woodward public space plan. As a result, funding can be more effectively sought for public space and corridor-wide improvements if coordinated as part of a regional and comprehensive plan for the Woodward Avenue Byway.

The two main concepts of the Plan are that unifying elements need to be implemented throughout the byway and that unique elements can be used to define a community or district on the byway. Criteria that guide development of the Plan include: incorporate and coordinate existing master plans, special studies, streetscape plans and programs as a basis for the Plan; use streetscape design and street elements and furniture to give a distinctive style and identity to districts and individual communities; use the site plan review process, zoning, low interest loan and grant programs to encourage facade maintenance and improvement; use streetscape and open space design to create and reinforce a walkable and pedestrian –friendly environment; clearly define and identify existing gateways through design and landscaping treatments and other design features; develop a mechanism for funding on-going maintenance; identify negative and unattractive features which detract from the corridor and identify processes for improvement or removal; and promote public art components.

Unifying elements suggested in the Plan include urban tolerant deciduous trees throughout the corridor in the public right-of-way; median or pedestrian refuge areas where lacking and appropriate; traffic signals on main arms with uniform style, color and size; standard uniform crosswalk design; district/community identification in the median or within the first block; on-street parking from the Detroit River to I-696; expanded and enhanced outdoor public spaces throughout the byway; prominent district/community elements along public spaces to provide identity and transition; a high level of maintenance to public spaces; no new billboards, and signage overlay recommendations; consistent size of banners 30" x 94"; standard light poles and fixtures; parking areas and trash areas screened from the roadway and pedestrian areas; landscaping to provide visual separation to breakdown expansiveness of roadway – use of crowning and lower bushes/shrubs for critical sight lines and retail zones; traffic speed limits at 35 miles per hour with signals timed for continuous drive through on green; and a main welcome center at the Ford Highland Park property with others in districts and downtowns.

A comprehensive way-finding plan is also suggested. Such a plan is being considered for the downtown in preparation for the Super Bowl. Another part of the signage recommended is the use of an illuminated street sign along the corridor.

The board of the WA3 approved the Plan on December 10, 2005.

The Heritage Team is requesting that the 11 municipalities that have Woodward Avenue adjacent to or within their boundaries accept and support the principles of the Plan, include the Plan concepts in their planning processes, and incorporate implementation of the relevant elements of the Plan under their jurisdiction. A resolution endorsing the Plan was submitted for CPC and City Council consideration.

CPC staff felt that the elements of the Plan appeared to be consistent with good urban design principles. Detroit is implementing or has implemented several portions of the Plan, especially within the downtown, and other initiatives of the City should not conflict with the general principles of the Plan. CPC staff noted that specific City actions might not exactly match those called for in the Plan. For example, if banner mounts are placed on many downtown light poles in preparation for the Super Bowl, they may or may not be at the height and size recommended in the Plan. However, this would not preclude banners installed along the rest of the corridor in the City from meeting the guidelines proposed.

Commissioner Simons inquired as to whether MDOT is responsible for the beautification project. Mr. Moots noted that MDOT is required to approve the Plan but is not responsible for funding. The City of Detroit has been paying for various streetscape improvements. Entities such as Downtown Development Authorities have been paying for improvements in the other municipalities. Ms. Carmona pointed out that the scenic byway designation has resulted in the allocation of funding. The funds, however, are not being allocated by community but rather by project.

Mr. Simons inquired as to choice of colors in the Plan for street signage. Ms. Carmona reviewed the colors on page 25 of the Plan. WA3 supports the idea of moving away from the shade of green currently used for MDOT signage.

Commissioner Glaser inquired as to plans for hosting a second open house. Ms. Carmona responded that public input sessions were held over one year ago. No other open houses are scheduled. However, the Woodward Heritage Team maintains a website at woodwardavenue.org. The Plan and other documents will be posted on the website.

In response to Ms. Bruhn, Ms. Carmona noted the interface between the Plan and various plans for such areas as New Center and the Central Business District.

**ACTION: Commissioner Glenn moved that the Commission accept the resolution in support of the Woodward Avenue Public Spaces Design Framework Plan and forward the resolution to City Council.
Commissioner Glaser seconded the motion.
Motion carried.**

Old Business-
Affordable
Housing
Strategy:

Further consideration was given to finalization of the affordable housing strategy.

CPC staff members Heidi Alcock, Deborah Ferris, James Ribbron, Janice Tillman, and Kathryn Underwood presented changes to the proposed strategy entitled, *A Housing Strategy for Detroit: Increasing and Strengthening Detroit's Housing, Neighborhood, and Economic Opportunities*. The changes were made as a result of comments of Commissioners at the CPC meeting of March 3, 2005 relative to public transportation and providing a safe environment for single parent headed households.

CPC staff reviewed organizational changes and clarifications relative to the policy goal of expanding economic opportunities.

Commissioner Glenn expressed concern that the strategy would never be put into effect. The City does not have the resources to bring all of the elements together. The Administration should be asked to be a partner of the strategy. A copy of the strategy should be sent to Buildings & Safety Engineering Department and the Department of Public Works. The departments need to "buy" into the strategy; otherwise, it will not work. Commissioner Glenn was not confident that the strategy would ever be implemented. He distributed copies of a resolution authorizing the formation of a Neighborhood Beautification Team. The resolution was approved by City Council in 1993 but to date was never implemented. He questioned whether the affordable housing strategy would ever be implemented.

Ms. Underwood noted steps the Administration has taken over the past few years to design initiatives by cluster. The question is how much should be presented to the Administration before the strategy is approved by the City Planning Commission and City Council approval. City Council approval should be obtained prior to approaching the Administration. All of the items in the strategy are not necessarily dependent upon City administration, e.g., the toolbox.

Commissioner Glenn questioned whether the neighborhoods would be cooperative and enthusiastic about the strategy. The neighborhoods have tried to implement many things in the past, such as the beautification project. However, nothing has been implemented. The projects fall on "deaf ears."

Commissioner Glaser inquired as to whether preservation of parks would be a part of the toolbox. She cited the need to provide recreational activities for kids, and the importance of the recreational link to housing. Ms. Underwood noted resources in the toolbox for that purpose.

Ms. Alcock noted that providing recreational space was a part of the strategic process in Fort Worth, Texas. Some of the money in that city's Model Blocks programs was dedicated to recreation.

Commissioner Jeffrey expressed support for the proposed strategy. The details of the strategy are very specific rather than theoretical. Many of the details are not contingent upon everyone saying it is okay to do. The toolbox is very specific. The creation of a neighborhood summit would

assist in providing momentum and alert the neighborhoods to resources and plans that have that have succeeded in other cities. Specific things can be done to get the ball rolling.

Commissioner Simons inquired as to the reasons the City has lost one half of public housing units. Ms. Ferris noted policies that have diminished the number of available public housing units and policies that have disqualified persons for public housing assistance. Up until 8-10 years ago, developers were required to provide one unit of public housing for every unit demolished. The policy was changed to not require the one -or-one replacement ratio. Mixed income projects became the favored type of development. Those types of projects tend to favor middle and upper rate income levels in lieu of small lower income.

Commissioner Simons inquired as to the recommendation to consider use of City-owned housing units to develop more scattered site public housing. He noted unsuccessful attempts of the City in 1972.

Commissioner Jeffrey inquired as to whether CDBG funds would be used to assist in implementation of the strategy. He noted the success of the DOCTOR program in developing the ability of the community in economic development. The housing strategy has the potential for similar impact in the housing field, particularly in providing the tool box and neighborhood summit.

As to the recommendation of creating and promoting alternative financing for individuals who purchase City-owned properties to bring properties up to code, Commissioner Simons inquired as to ways to obtain financing. Ms. Tillman noted the efforts of the Housing Task Force in creating an ordinance regarding the purchase of city-owned property. The Task Force discussed priorities and established goals to make the process simpler. CPC staff agreed to share a draft of the ordinance with the Commission. Ms. Ferris noted the possibility of using land contracts and reducing the amount of the down payment.

Commissioner Glenn cited the need to educate citizens regarding responsibilities associated in buying a home and home ownership. Ms. Tillman noted that the housing strategy included an educational component.

Commissioner Christensen noted that in the past, citizens were required to attend a class prior to receiving any money to purchase a home.

Commissioner Smith expressed concern about vacant properties and squatters. She inquired as to how the City should deal with squatters when owners try to reclaim their property. The squatters should not be evicted. She suggested adding bullet points under housing opportunities. Ms. Alcock noted that CPC staff has discussed the need to return vacant abandoned properties to reuse as fast as possible; e.g. court appointed receivership to overlook property so it doesn't lose value.

Commissioner Simons suggested that after City Council approval, the Commission revisit the strategy in six months.

Commissioner Glaser inquired as to the possibility as suggested by WSU to allow City employees to purchase City-owned property. The State Act should be overturned. Ms. Tillman noted that a State Act prohibits a City employee to enter into an agreement with that municipality. The Housing Trust Fund looked at the issue over a year ago and could revisit it. Ms. Bruhn noted that part of the problem is the Law Department's interpretation of the State Act.

Commissioner Jeffrey inquired as to the possibility of offering city-owned property for \$1.00. Ms. Smith felt that that was a different issue which should be handled by the Land Bank Authority. Ms. Alcock cited the status of pending legislation regarding the establishment of a Land Bank Authority.

Again Commissioner Glenn felt that the strategy was good. However, he expressed reservation about departmental support.

ACTION: Commissioner Glenn moved that the Commission forward the strategy to City Council for its approval.
Commissioner Smith seconded the motion.
Motion carried.

CPC staff noted that comments about squatters and City-owned property would be added to the strategy.

CPC
Meeting
Scheduled
for
March and
April 2005

The Commissioners agreed to schedule special meetings on March 31, 2005 and April 14, 2005 to accommodate review and action on the 2005-2006 Community Development Block Grant/Neighborhood Opportunity Fund program. The meeting schedule for the months of March and April would be mailed to the Commissioners.

Director's
Report:

Ms. Bruhn presented the Director's Report.

City Council approved the new Zoning Ordinance on March 16, 2005 by a vote of 4 to 2. The effective date of the Zoning Ordinance is May 28, 2005. City Council members voting no did not comment on the reasons for their opposition. City Council had asked the CPC staff to follow up on questions/concerns raised by the community at the Council's March 14, 2005 public hearing. These related to controls over group homes, topless bars near schools, notification requirements, and enforcement. The Buildings & Safety Engineering Department expressed concern about the site plan review process and its interface with the P&DD. CPC staff is already preparing the first amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Bruhn noted that she forwarded to Medina Noor, Director of the Department of Administrative Hearings, questions/concerns raised by Commissioners at the March 3, 2005 CPC meeting. CPC staff hoped to have an answer from Ms. Noor by the next Commission meeting.

Adj.: The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 PM.